

Vehiculating resistance: narrative and visuality in Voz Operária, a case of antagonist journalism

Stefano Martinelli

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA
UNIVERSITÀ CA' FOSCARI DI VENEZIA

Fulvia Zega

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI GENOVA

ABSTRACT

This article examines the role and the function performed by *Voz Operária* during the Brazilian military dictatorship. Despite not abandoning its ideological principles, the monthly emerged in this period as a catalyst for a culture of resistance and democracy, appealing to a composite readership. By highlighting the rhetorical and visual stratagems employed by its editors, this article reveals how the interaction of narrative, caricatures, and woodcuts generated a common emotional realm, unifying the different souls of the opposition front.

Keywords: *Voz Operária*, Brazilian dictatorship, antagonist press, caricatures, woodcuts.

Este artigo analisa o papel e função desempenhados por *Voz Operária* durante o período de regime militar no Brasil. Apesar de não ter abandonado seus princípios ideológicos, o periódico emergiu nesse período como um catalisador de uma cultura de resistência e democracia, dirigindo-se a um público composto por diversas camadas da sociedade. Ao destacar as estratégias retóricas e visuais empregadas por seus editores, este artigo revela como a interação entre narrativa, caricaturas e xilogravuras gerou um espaço emocional comum, unificando as diferentes vertentes da frente de oposição.

Palavras-chave: *Voz Operária*, ditadura militar, imprensa antagonista, charges, xilogravura

Inventaram esse pacote
 Para embrulhar a situação
 Mas nele só tem aperto
 Carestia e inflação
 O custo da vida aumenta
 E piora a situação
 (Azulão, O Pacote)

Introduction

Voz Operária, published from 1949 to 1980¹, served as the official publication of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) between 1964 and 1980 and can be recognized as one of the clandestine periodicals that played the most significant role in terms of distribution and editorial consistency during the period of the Brazilian military regime, when it emerged as a national phenomenon and a reference point for opposition forces. During those years, the monthly integrated a broad universe of 150 antagonist periodicals (Kucinsky 1991, 5-7), joined by the intransigent opposition to the military regime (Comissão da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo, 4-8). Moreover, the newspaper represents an essential source that sheds light on the resistance strategies adopted by the PCB against institutionalized violence, as well as the tactics employed to combat the dictatorial regime that seized power following the April 1964 coup d'état. The publication merges domestic and international politics within its pages, offering readers not only a comprehensive understanding of the political stance of the Brazilian left but also an insight into the geopolitical intricacies that characterized those years. Upon an initial examination of the newspaper, it becomes apparent that most articles were devoted to analysing the domestic political situation, accompanied by a substantial number of works centered on the PCB, generally reporting resolutions from the Central Committee, speeches by Carlos Prestes, and didactic texts on Marxism-Leninism. While the primary focus of *Voz Operária* rested on domestic politics, a smaller portion of its content delved into the political realities of other Latin American countries. Additionally, approximately one percent of its

¹ The specified period encompasses the entire lifespan of *Voz Operária*, commencing with its establishment in Rio de Janeiro on February 19, 1949. However, it is important to note that the newspaper did not maintain consistent editorial continuity over the thirty-year timeframe in question. Instead, it was published regularly between 1949 and 1959, and then again from 1964 to 1975. From 1976 onward, it was published abroad. Throughout its existence, the relationship between *Voz Operária* and the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) was marked by turbulence, particularly during the 1950s. In fact, in 1959, the newspaper was shuttered at the behest of the Party. It was only in 1964 that *Voz Operária* assumed the role of the official organ of the PCB.

chronicles explored relations with European political parties. By intertwining written text with visual resources, *Voz Operária* effectively constructs and presents a rhetorical and visual opposition that denounces the actions of the dictatorship and its entanglement with the United States, nurturing a rebellious sentiment among marginalized communities in the military-ruled Brazil.

The first paragraph will be dedicated to the characterisation of *Voz Operária* as a discursive agent of political antagonism and popular organisation in a context where the circulation of pieces of news was placed under the strict control of the military regime. In political circumstances where the governmental control of both public opinion and the vehiculation of national and international pieces of news is subordinated to the preservation of the immaculate image of the Armed Forces and to the restructuration of the ethical and moral principles of the nation, deeper scrutiny of the role and the functions of the local, antagonist publications can bring a valuable contribution to the comprehension of resistance not only as a political phenomenon expressed through strikes, protests, and sabotages but also as a discursive and cultural practice, oriented at the demystification of the official rhetoric, meticulously manufactured through the merging of censorship and propaganda techniques. In the specific case of the Brazilian bureaucratic-authoritarian regime, a thorough study of the *carioca* journal can shed light on the manners and the attitudes adopted by this banished party to discursively counter the action of the military rulers, who did not conceal their obsession with what the historian Carlos Fico defined the “ponto de vista otimista” (Fico 1997, 17-18), a perspective of buoyancy and confidence in the future that, according to the author, was foundational of a myth of social self-recognition in the community of Brazil. The stringent supervision of the means of communication had created in the country a real informational void and isolation, devised with the purpose to anaesthetise the citizens’ inclination to critical thinking and to lay the foundation for a long-standing process of moral restructuration and ideological cleansing, centred in the eradication of Marxist-Leninist political doctrines, perceived by the militaries as a real threat to the survival of the Western way of life. As it will be shown, during the years between 1964 and 1976 – year when the journal’s printing was forcedly moved to Europe- the *Voz Operária* arose as one of the most resistant and impactful agents of communication integrating the wide panorama of alternative and clandestine political journals, a solid reference point on which the PCB counted on not only for the maintenance of its militant base but also for the structuration of a composite opposition, pro-democracy front, built through a continuous dialogue with other political factions. The paragraph will attempt to explain, through excerpts extrapolated from multiple releases of the monthly, the decision to use the term antagonist to qualify this political journal, as it is the authors’ opinion that this expression renders more comprehensively the proactive

and dynamic nature of its behaviour. In a political framework in which censorship and propaganda were weapons of oppression to all intents and purposes, *Voz Operária* was capable of effectively penetrating the extra-parliamentary debate by performing political, pedagogical, and mobilisational functions through a reconsideration of its traditional role as agent of chronicle and information in a direct, clarifying, and amplifying key. Such a transformation of its historical nature came from the party's necessity to embark on a process of demystification of the discourse of the military *junta*, done with the intention to educate people to reflection, judgement, and, eventually, to the preparation of joint action of renovation. Moreover, it will be shown how, notwithstanding the fact that it was the official press organ of a specific political party, the general inclination of the monthly was to overcome its inner circle of readers and the ideological barriers that separated the PCB from other political organisations, with the purpose of establishing networks of exchange with other political forces: though it always dedicated significant portions of its pages to the history and the values of the PCB, as much as to the discussions within the higher ranks of the party, *Voz Operária* never concealed that one of its objectives was to overcome the "particularity of the *status quo*" (Zizek 2019, 312) through the revindication of universal principles, like democracy, freedom, and social justice. Similarly to Pandolfi, according to whom the communist press was designed to "informar os militantes, formar política e ideologicamente os membros do Partido; e dialogar com segmentos da esquerda, sobretudo o público não comunista" (Pandolfi 1995, 21)², we will shed light on how the different thematical blocs generally present in the *Voz Operária* - PCB's internal discussions, criticism to the military's government, and international politics-represented the background to what we have interpreted as being a tripartite strategy of communication, constructed on the intersection of three different horizons of dialogue: that of internal discussion, that of proselytism, and that of the dialogue with other socio-political subjects. Such a discursive setting was fundamental in making the *Voz Operária* not only a space of political discussion inside and outside the PCB, but also an actor whose words had an implication outside the spaces of its pages, thanks to the establishment of communication channels with different sectors of the population, involved using strategies that tapped the right emotional and cultural strings, such as that of repeatedly evoking the ideas of poverty, shortage, and that of the North American incursion. The meaning was to convince the audience that opposition was effective only when embarked on collectively, and that every action of dissidence, even if minimal, acquired utmost relevance in the long-term democratic mission: the proactive and

² "To inform militants, politically and ideologically shape Party members, and engage in dialogue with segments of the left, particularly the non-communist audience". Translation by the authors.

dynamic expression of dissent, in fact, was depicted as a process opening, every time, some significant fissures in the armour of a regime often characterised as internally weak and fragile.

The following paragraph, instead, will direct its attention toward the scrutiny of the comic strips and woodcuts which serve to complement and reinforce the political message conveyed in the editorials and articles. During the period spanning from 1966 to 1974, the newspaper extensively employed iconography as an immediate means of suggestion and reader education. This period also coincided with a metamorphosis of the PCB and its press organ, as visible in the methods employed in political resistance against the dictatorship and the portrayal of the military regime itself. This transformation, reflected within the pages of the newspaper, encompassed both the political and strategic role assumed by the PCB during those years of severe repression. Initially, *Voz Operária* exhibited a somewhat confused and optimistic stance regarding the Brazilian political landscape following the military coup. However, it soon demonstrated a heightened clairvoyance regarding the realistic prospects of opposition to a military regime that proved to be more resolute than initially surmised. Despite apparent internal divisions, the military regime exhibited a remarkable capacity for self-preservation, largely supported by certain sectors of civil society, as well as its efficient apparatus of repression. Subsequently, after an initial wait-and-see posture, the PCB, engrossed in the process of heightened awareness inaugurated in 1966 with the release of the document "Resolução política", definitively positioning itself on the front lines of opposition with renewed vigour in 1972. Our analysis, which examines 71 issues released between 1966 and 1976, attempts to furnish a comprehensive description of the newspaper's work, considering its nature of partisan press while outlining its function as a political adversary through an investigation of the themes broached and the evolution of the strategies undertaken by the newspaper to contest the military regime. Within this framework, emphasis on the iconographic apparatus aims to elucidate the way the editorial committee employed cartoons as an immediate and direct form of indictment against the dictatorship, latching onto specific arguments such as violence against the population, calamitous economic management, arbitrary detentions, censorship, and military subjugation to the United States. Furthermore, an inquiry will be realised into the use of woodcuts to visually depict practices of resistance, illustrating, through the language of pictorial realism, the indispensable unity among the protagonists of resistance and reinforcing articles centered on antagonistic endeavours via the alluring and immediate nature of imagery. In this case, the interests of *Voz Operária*, functioning as the speaker for the ideology of the PCB leadership and as the catalyst/coordinator of militancy, are primarily directed towards the military regime, as the political strategies,

resistance initiatives, and resolutions endorsed by the party are perpetually subjected to comparison with the trajectory of the dictatorship and the portrayal presented by the newspaper. The entire undertaking of the PCB, indeed, exists in a perpetual and opposing communion with the ruling military faction, as unmistakably observed within the pages of *Voz Operária*.

The role of *Voz Operária* in the conflict between the state and dissidents: a case of discursive political antagonism

In the continuous braiding of information and counter-information, official and antagonist channels of communication, we find a novel key for the analysis of the multi-faceted war that barred political organisations engaged from the outside of the parliamentary arena against the forces of totalitarianism. These *media* channels not only represent one of the multiple arms of submission in the hands of authoritarian governments but are also one of the few solid means of expression that defectors could count on for the expression of their antipathy to the military rule. As noted by Tomaselli, “dal desiderio di informazione, ancora più poderoso nei luoghi ove una delle parti è oppressa, prorompe una vegetazione rigogliosa di pubblicazioni clandestine” (Tomaselli 1951, 58)³, an extreme practice of defence against the lack of freedom (Dal Pont, Leonetti, and Massara 1964, 11). *Voz Operária* represented “la permanencia de los partidos, sindicatos u organizaciones estudiantiles perseguidas” (Albistur 2021, 18)⁴: this publication was, on the one side, the proof that political and cultural ferment had not been quenched by the Armed Forces, but had adapted to the new conditions; on the other, it embodied the necessity of both the publishers and the readers to maintain their identities as individuals and members of a social or political front (Calvo González 2018, 122).

The decision to employ the adjective “antagonist” to define *Voz Operária*, represents the culprit of a process oriented at finding an expression going beyond concepts like clandestinity or counterpropaganda, as these words can only partially describe the phenomenon we are determined to characterise. Typifying *Voz Operária* as a clandestine periodical would reduce its existence to a condition externally imposed, erasing its historical function for the PCB since 1949⁵ and the contribution it gave to the party’s pedagogical effort. Similarly, while describing it

³ “From the desire for knowledge, even more powerful in places where one party is oppressed, emerges a flourishing vegetation of clandestine publications”. Translation by the authors.

⁴ “The enduring presence of persecuted political parties, unions, or student organizations”. Translation by the authors.

⁵ The monthly publication had already been the party’s official press organ between 1949 and 1959. Taken over by *Novos Rumos* between 1959 and 1964, its return during the era of physical and psychological violence could be interpreted as the party’s need to give its people the confidence that only the presence of a solid representative symbol or institution can provide.

as a means of counterpropaganda serves the purpose of outlining part of its rhetorical strategies⁶, such a definition runs the risk of fitting the conduct of the monthly into an action-reaction dynamic that relegates this form of press to a passive position, failing to take into consideration the proactive nature of its attitude:

Os comunistas devem voltar-se para as massas, com decisão, audácia e iniciativa, ajudando-as a preparar e desencadear as lutas por suas reivindicações mais imediatas e vitais – contra a carestia [...] – e também contra ditadura diretamente – contra sua política de esfomeamento do povo, de subordinação do país aos interesses do imperialismo norte-americano. [...] O povo brasileiro quer pão e liberdade, quer eleições livres e diretas, quer democracia.⁷

In view of this declaration of intent, we can neither assimilate *Voz Operária* to Delarbre's concept of marginal press – “no habría prensa marginal si la clase dominante no tuviera sus medios de información” (Delarbre 1991, 9)⁸-, nor to the notion of counter-propaganda intended as the proselytist process oriented at the “adhesión ideológica total” (Albistur 2021, 19) of the readers, as the journal's purpose was instead political and pedagogical. *Voz Operária*, in fact, was a journal “voltado para as mobilizações operárias, [que] divulga as principais teses do Partido comunista”⁹ and “criado com o propósito de se tornar um jornal para a massa dos trabalhadores, com uma linguagem direta e acessível” (*Ibidem*)¹⁰. In other words, it was conceived to become a space where *as massas trabalhadoras*,

⁶ “Assinalar os temas do adversário”; “atacar os pontos fracos”; “colocar a propaganda do adversário em contradição”: See: Jean-Marie Domenach, *A propaganda política*. Mores: Ridendo Castigat, 1963.

⁷ “Communists should turn to the masses with determination, audacity, and initiative, helping them prepare and trigger struggles for their most immediate and vital demands - against rising prices [...] - as well as against the dictatorship directly - against its policy of starving the people and subordinating the country to the interests of American imperialism. [...] The Brazilian people demand bread and freedom, they want free and direct elections, they want democracy”. Authors' translation of the frsgment taken from “O Dever dos Comunistas”, *Voz Operária*, n.14, February 1966, p.1.

⁸ “There wouldn't be a marginal press if the dominant class didn't have its own means of information”. Such a definition would only be suitable when applied to the position of the monthly in a *media* panorama monopolised by governmental channels but would be inappropriate as we consider its actual dynamism, both as a political-pedagogical agent of information and as actor of mass organisation and mobilisation.

⁹ See: <http://memorialdademocracia.com.br/card/a-agitacao-e-propaganda-do-pcb>. Accessed: August 2023.

¹⁰ “Attentive to workers' mobilizations, [which] disseminates the main theses of the Communist Party and created with the purpose of becoming a newspaper for the working masses, with a direct and accessible language”. Translation by the authors.

along with the higher ranks of the PCB, intellectuals, and the militants belonging to other echelons of the population, could virtually discuss and reflect on the events regarding Brazil, the Latin American region, and the rest of the world, be part of processes of collective identity-building and education, and create ideological bridges with other anti-authoritarian forces. These features made of *Voz Operária* an active protagonist of the national political vicissitudes, an actor whose words went beyond the physical limits imposed by the canons of printed pages to become engines of mobilisation.

There are, in my opinion, two crucial reasons behind the vitality of the *carioca* journal. The first one is related to the historical role attributed by Marxist-inspired thinkers to political newspapers, conceived as collective organisers that, through the reflection of ideologies, create meanings and produce realities that are then absorbed by militants and reproduced in their behaviours. Moreover, by 1964 the PCB had opted for the broad-front, pacific revolution policy, which gave lots of importance to journalism in the erosion of the capitalist-imperialist political and economic hegemony. Such a perspective reinforced the role of journals as coordinators of a political struggle even in illegality, a position which, up to that moment, had been restricted to the short period of legality of the party (Mourão Pereira 2016, 106-107). The second reason, instead, is to be found in the re-consideration of the traditional informative tasks generally endorsed by journals. If we can speak of the *Voz Operária* as a political agent, it is because deeper scrutiny of its conduct reveals that the mission of reporting facts, apparently steady and passive, acquires a triple nature under the censorious climate of the civil-military regime. As a matter of fact, the perception is that information in the monthly appears direct, clarifying, and amplifying (Ibarra Güell 1989, 689-692), i.e., aimed at countering the lack of coverage of the official press – “Depois de cinco anos de arrôcho salarial, quando a ditadura impôs condições draconianas para os “reajustamentos” salariais, a inflação continua”¹¹-, at breaking the circle of the official truth – “Aí está mais um pequeno retrato do Govêrno, dêsse Govêrno que tem a desfaçatez de proclamar que o homem é sua meta principal”¹²-, and at echoing silenced social and political conflicts – “Vencendo tôdas as dificuldades criadas pelo golpe de 1964, os estudantes brasileiros, do norte ao sul do país, organizam a resistência e a luta contra a política educacional da ditadura”¹³-. Seen

¹¹ “After five years of wage squeeze, during which the dictatorship imposed draconian conditions for “salary adjustments”, inflation persists”. Authors’ translation of the fragment taken from the article “Carnaval ameaça o regime”, *Voz Operária*, n.48, February 1969, p.8.

¹² “This is another small portrait of the Government, of this Government that has the audacity to proclaim that man is its main goal”. Authors’ translation of the fragment taken from the article “Retrato da Ditadura”, *Voz Operária*, n.29, July 1967, p.5.

¹³ “Overcoming all the difficulties created by the 1964 coup, Brazilian students from north to south of the country organize resistance and fight against the educational policy of the dictatorship”.

from this perspective, the task of keeping people informed becomes an occasion for criticism, denunciation, and, above all, for breaking the veil of oblivion induced by official censorship and propaganda, training the readers' critical thinking abilities (Tomaselli 1951, 90) so to encourage their intention to act for a renewal. Thanks to this dynamism, passive political dissent mutates into political antagonism, that is, a constructive political struggle against what Slavoj Žižek defines "Particolare dello *status quo*" (Žižek 2019, 312).

From the examination of the around 70 monthly releases consulted for the time-lapse 1964-1979, it is possible to isolate three intertwining core themes that represent a *file rouge* in the thematical structure of the newspaper under the Brazilian civil-military regime. These three blocks, treating the vicissitudes of the party, national politics and economics, and the international news, give us a crystal-clear perspective on the ideological stances of the *Partido Comunista Brasileiro*, of the periodical's long-term purposes, and of the journal's behaviour towards the public. In reference to this last point, it is exactly from the constant intersection of these three main subjects composing the informational architecture of the journal, that the reader has the opportunity to deduce the editors' capacity of integrating three discursive horizons which can be isolated in the following way: that of the dialogue with militants, a demonstration that the life of the party, the reflections of its members, and their theorisations were still undergoing despite the condition of oppression; that of proselytism, focussed on the need to broaden the militant base of the party to reinvigorate the militants-readers' ideological and political positions, and promote a transition to a democratic regime built on communist and socialist principles; and that engaging with differently-oriented socio-political agents, breaking ideological barriers and repeatedly showing that opposition under authoritarian regimes could be effective if people acted jointly. Generally speaking, we note from this subdivision that the discursive struggle embraced against the militaries' exclusivist portrayal of the nation was based not only on the relationship with the journal's *circuito fechado* – that of communist militants and of the theorisation of a democracy intended in communist terms-, but also on the need to nourishing a *circuito aberto*, composed by the non-militant and the apolitical audience: as highlighted by Mourão Pereira, "Se eram publicados tantos textos de interesse de um público mais amplo que aqueles ligados de forma orgânica ao PCB" (Mourão Pereira, 2016)¹⁴, a circumstance that brought the monthly to assume diverse tones and expressions in accordance with the topics and the public of reference.

Authors' translation of the fragment taken from the article "A política educacional da ditadura", *Voz Operária*, n.27, Abril 1967, p.2.

¹⁴ "There were published texts of interest to a broader audience than those organically linked to the PCB". Translated by the authors.

Concerning the closed circle of readers, lots of space in the releases is dedicated to the vicissitudes regarding the PCB, such as the party's resolutions, international meetings, and news reporting events involving foreign Marxist-inspired parties, especially those of Latin America, as we can read in the articles "Cuba socialista: dez anos de luta"¹⁵ or "CHILE – vitória da unidade – derrota do imperialismo, da reação e do "esquerdismo""¹⁶. At the same time, it is possible to find articles dedicated to the history of the party, such as the series "História do PCB" present from the 83rd to the 90th number, or the celebration of remarkable personalities of the party, like Luis Carlos Prestes, founder of the party – "Prestes é condecorado na URSS"¹⁷-, or Gregório Bezerra – "Solidariedade a Um Heroi do Povo: Gregório Bezerra"¹⁸-, mythologised for their ability to incarnate the values of a pure and struggling Communism. Altogether, they underline the attention of *Voz Operária* to maintain a constant dialogical connection with the hard core of communist militants. On the other hand, contributions regarding national and international politics tend to adopt a rhetorical approach that fuses together principles common to a broad opposition front, such as those of democracy, freedom, and the equal participation of people in politics, with the party's ideological peculiarities. In these sections, the editors of *Voz Operária* prove to have remarkable abilities in finding the right keys to engage the readers of the open circle, through the recourse to sufferings, concerns, and perspectives common to the entire oppressed population. For instance, while reporting on and criticising the diverse aspects of the military government, frequently portrayed with the *topos* gorilla – as it will be shown lately in this essay-, the latter is generally portrayed as structurally and ideologically fragile – "O grupo de generais *gorilas* [emphasis added] sentiu [...] que a terra começava a tremer a seus pés. [...] contra êle se voltava a maioria das forças do país"¹⁹- as if the junta was coming closer and closer to an eventual collapse under collective pressure. In other cases, such as in the passage below, the journal reported on the abuses of power perpetrated by the juntas,

¹⁵ "Cuba socialista: dez anos de luta", *Voz Operária*, n.47, April 1969, p.6.

¹⁶ "CHILE – vitória da unidade – derrota do imperialismo, da reação e do "esquerdismo"", *Voz Operária*, n.93, April 1973, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷ "Prestes é condecorado na URSS", *Voz Operária*, n.97, March 1973, p.1.

¹⁸ "Solidariedade a Um Heroi do Povo: Gregório Bezerra", *Voz Operária*, n.47, January 1969, p.1.

¹⁹ "The group of *gorillas* generals felt that the earth began to shake under their feet (...). Most of the country's forces had turned against them". Authors' translation of a fragment taken from the article "Confissão de Fracasso", *Voz Operária*, n.47, January 1969, p.1.

A ditadura continua a espalhar o terror por todo o país. Violências e arbitrariedades, como invasão de lares e prisão de indefensos cidadãos, são praticadas todos os dias. Jornais são invadidos e tem suas edições apreendidas nas bancas ou mesmo antes de sair das oficinas.²⁰

With the intention of sparking the readers' empathy and compassion for the sufferance of fellow citizens, therefore triggering an emotional push that, eventually, could have favoured processes of coalition-building. Similarly, bringing to light the social repercussion of the militaries' economic policies, from the contraction of salaries to the increasing poverty rates among workers, besides reporting the reality of facts, did not only have the purpose of raising awareness, but also to instil in the readers' mind – militants or non-militants- the worry for economic hardship and inequality:

Quando se confrontam os “éxitos” e o “milagre” econômico da ditadura (que recebem entusiásticos elogios de Nixon) com a realidade enfrentada pelo povo, as conclusões são chocantes. O achatamento do salário real dos trabalhadores de 64 para cá foi de 45%; [...] a política salarial da ditadura confiscou dos trabalhadores, entre 1965 e 1970, cerca de 70 bilhões e 400 milhões de cruzeiros.²¹

When the attention is instead placed on international news, the international relationships entertained by the military regime come under the spotlight, as the journal tends to inform on the political, cultural, and economic laces between the militaries, the United States, and international financial institutions. It is common to read about the Armed Forces being characterised as *entreguistas* (literally, selling-outers), *vende-pátrias*, *antinacionais*, i.e., serving the interests of the North American power in the political and economic areas. In the article “Constituição Imposta”, the editors accuse the military junta of enforcing a violent, arbitrary constitution, which had transformed Brazil into a puppet of the United States:

²⁰ “The dictatorship continues to spread terror throughout the country. Violence and arbitrariness, such as home invasions and the imprisonment of defenceless citizens, are practiced every day. Newspapers are invaded and their editions are seized from newsstands or even before they leave the printing presses”. Authors' translation of a section of the article “Violências continuam em todo o país”, *Voz Operária*, n.48, February 1969, 3.

²¹ “When the “successes” and “economic miracle” of the dictatorship (which receive enthusiastic praise from Nixon) are confronted with the reality faced by the people, the conclusions are shocking. The real wage squeeze for workers from 1964 onwards was 45%; [...] the wage policy of the dictatorship confiscated from workers, between 1965 and 1970, approximately 70 billion and 400 million cruzeiros”. Authors' translation from the article “A política antioperária e de opressão da ditadura”, *Voz Operária*, n. 86, Abril 1972, 3.

A ditadura tem em vista avançar no sentido da sua institucionalização. Quer assegurar a continuidade da minoria reacionária e entreguista. [...] Quase três anos já decorreram do golpe de abril. [...] *É a humilhação nacional de se transformar o Brasil num país títere dos EUA* [emphasis added]. É a entrega de nossas riquezas e do produto de nosso trabalho aos monopólios norte-americanos.²²

In this explicit allusion to an external, *ianque*, influence on the Brazilian integrity, the purpose is, in this case, that of creating and nourishing the narration around a presumed external enemy constantly ready to take control of the economy, the culture, and the politics of the Brazilian society. All things considered, political opposition becomes an all-round war against an enemy, the Armed Forces, embodying all the worries mentioned over the previous lines, i.e., poverty, an imperialist invasion, or the possibility of being victims of state terrorism. The excerpt below is substantially explicative of this:

Nessa direção deve efetivamente orientar-se a atividade fundamental dos comunistas, em busca de uma mais estreita ligação com as forças capazes de garantir a vitória da revolução. Sem essa atividade sistemática e metódica [...], visando ao enraizamento de nosso Partido entre as grandes massas trabalhadoras, não será possível nem a vitória da revolução nem a efetiva derrota da ditadura.²³

Although the PCB had embraced a pacific, coalition-based political line, therefore leaving behind the possibility of an armed struggle, we see in this passage that it never abandoned an inclination to political fight. There was, in fact, still the intention to bring about a revolution, as much as the necessity to “Construir um forte e numeroso Partido da Classe Operária”²⁴ able to incorporate and mobilise the *proletariado*. Yet, beyond the revolutionary task, anti-authoritarianism and democracy had become the priorities to be attained through compromise and cooperation with non-militants and other political sides, and it

²² “The dictatorship aims to advance towards its institutionalization. It wants to ensure the continuity of the reactionary and pro-imperialist minority. [...] Almost three years have passed since the April coup. [...] It is the national humiliation of turning Brazil into a puppet country of the USA. It is the surrender of our wealth and the products of our labour to American monopolies”. Author’s translation of a section of the article “Constituição imposta”, *Voz Operária*, n.23, December 1966, 1.

²³ “The fundamental activity of the communists should effectively be oriented towards seeking a closer connection with the forces capable of ensuring the victory of the revolution. Without this systematic and methodical activity, aimed at rooting our Party among the large working masses, it will not be possible to achieve either the victory of the revolution or the effective defeat of the dictatorship”. Authors’ translation of the article “Não subordinar nossa atividade à Possibilidade de Golpes”, *Voz Operária*, n.20, September 1966, 2.

²⁴ “Construir um forte e numeroso Partido da Classe Operária”, *Voz Operária*, n.106, December 1973, 7-8.

was the party's main responsibility to forge solid and fecund networks to oust the militaries:

A nossa principal tarefa tática consiste em mobilizar, unir e organizar a classe operária e demais forças patrióticas e democráticas para a luta contra o regime ditatorial, pela derrota da ditadura e a conquista das liberdades democráticas.²⁵

The core ambition was to give birth to a “Frente Patriótica contra o Fascismo”²⁶, able to gather and channel the “pouco organizadas e dispersas”²⁷ expressions of dissatisfaction with the reactionary military government under a united insignia of freedom and equality. As understandable from the excerpt above, there is in the *Voz Operária* the perceived duty to exert influence on a composite public, playing a significant role in the readers' political education and inclination to networking, combining introspective processes with proselytism and exchange with differently oriented socio-political groups (Cortina Orero 2012). As highlighted by de Barcelos and Thiese (2012, 11) “sua função era se tornar um instrumento que difunde, congrega e articula as informações a fim de veicular conteúdos ideológicos e programáticos de uma corrente política” (de Barcelos and Thiese 2012, 11): the tripartite strategy of diffusion adopted by the periodical demonstrates its capacity to engage different sectors of the audience by touching the right cultural and emotional strings. In other words, the evocation of determined worries, as much as a discursive tactic meant to catch the interest of a composite public, were supposed to play a pivotal part in the conscientisation of the readers who, eventually, would have been brought to take concrete actions to revert their conditions of oppression.

Caricatures for denunciation, woodcuts for edification: the iconic zenith of *Voz Operária*

Within the contextual framework previously outlined, it is worth to conduct a reflection on the iconographic elements employed by *Voz Operária*, with a specific focus on the newspaper's pages during the period spanning from 1966 to 1974, previously defined as the zenith of its iconic expression. While the visual components include caricatures, woodcuts, and photographs, this essay concentrates on the first two categories, with a particular emphasis on the different values and divergent functions – in the author's view- attributed to them by the

²⁵ “Our main tactical task is to mobilize, unite, and organize the working class and other patriotic and democratic forces for the fight against the dictatorial regime, for the defeat of the dictatorship, and for the conquest of democratic freedoms”. Authors' translation. *Ibidem*.

²⁶ “Por uma Frente Patriótica contra o Fascismo” *Voz Operária*, n.106, December 1973, 1.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

newspaper's editorial board. In other words, although both caricatures and woodcuts carry the enduring capacity to evoke emotions (Freedberg 2009, XXXV), our analysis of the material under scrutiny, comprising 27 vignettes and 12 woodcuts²⁸, unveils how these visual elements were strategically utilized to allude to distinct themes and evoke contrasting emotional responses, encapsulated within the concepts of indictment and resistance. Within the symbiotic relationship between iconography and textual discourse, the semiotic contrast between caricatures and woodcuts pertains to the thematic terrain they engage with and harks back to the conventional roles ascribed to each genre. In this context, drawing upon seminal studies on pictorial satire by Kris and Gombrich, it becomes evident how this genre can be construed, on one hand, as an act of denunciation and, on the other, as an instrument for countering hostile impulses, a means of escaping manifestations of aggression, and a medium of emancipation through the lens of the grotesque. In other words, this pertains to what Gombrich ascribes as the anti-magical capability to negate, through mockery, the influence of adversaries (Woodfield 1996, 338). Hence, it is conceivable to attribute to the denunciatory function of satirical imagery a subversive potency that, via the medium of irony, diminishes the reverence—or, in our current context, the terror—inspired by adversary. This is exemplified by the caricature featured in the 48th issue (1969) of *Voz Operária*, wherein the then-President Artur da Costa e Silva metamorphoses into a gorilla wielding a bayonet while grasping a book (Figure 1): here, the act of lampooning military figures aligns with the imperative of decrying the heightened censorship that ensued following the promulgation of the *Ato Institucional* nº 5 (AI-5) on December 13, 1968. This dual function of denunciation and irreverent commentary, typical of partisan press, emanates directly from the pronouncement articulated by the Central Committee of the PCB, as exposed in the article titled “Abaixo o fascismo” in the 47th issue.

O grupo dos generais *gorilas* [emphasis added] deu um novo golpe. O Ato Institucional n. 5 liquidou com os restos de democracia que ainda existiam. Anulou todos os direitos e garantias individuais, abolindo o “habeas-corpus” e tornando possível a prisão perpetua de qualquer cidadão. Tornou sem nenhuma significação o direito de voto, pois a ditadura pode cassar, à sua vontade, os 4municípios. [...] a liberdade de imprensa foi inteiramente sufocada. Deixa de existir, na prática, o poder legislativo. Também o poder judiciário é anulado, pois a ditadura pode remover ou demitir os juízes. O grupo militar dominante rasgou, assim, a Constituição que ele próprio havia imposto a nação²⁹.

²⁸ The caricatures and woodcuts examined in this essay constitute the entirety of those encountered in the issues under scrutiny.

²⁹ “The group of gorilla generals [emphasis added] staged another coup. Institutional Act 5 wiped out the remnants of democracy that still existed. It cancelled all individual rights and guarantees,



Figura 1: *Voz Operária*, n.48, fevereiro 1969, p.3.

The composition of the page confers a predominant role to the image, placed prominently at the centre-top. The absence of a caption, a recurring practice of the editorial team, is compensated for by the headline of the article positioned below the image, “Censura sem retoques. Ditadura sem mascara”, firmly establishing a cohesive link between the image and the text to facilitate a profound comprehension of the contained message. With the promulgation of AI-5, a moment that represents darkest hour of the Brazilian dictatorship and inaugurates an extensive period of arbitrary persecutions against both actual and presumed regime adversaries, the military authorities revealed, according to the monthly, their real nature. On the one hand, they exhibited their inherent inclination towards violence and repression, while, on the other hand, they displayed a heightened sense of insecurity. Indeed, the front-page editorial articulates:

As medidas tomadas contra a imprensa mostram ainda que a ditadura, apesar de sentir-se amparada pelos fuzis e canhões, tem medo da divulgação dos fatos, dos acontecimentos, da verdade, mesmo quando essa divulgação é feita com as distorções e a parcialidade do objetivismo burguesês. e chega ao ponto, como se

abolishing habeas corpus and making it possible to imprison any citizen in perpetuity. It rendered the right to vote meaningless, since the dictatorship could revoke the 4 municipalities at will. [...] Freedom of the press was completely stifled. In practice, the legislature no longer exists. The judiciary is also cancelled out, as the dictatorship can remove or dismiss judges. The ruling military group thus tore up the Constitution that it had itself imposed on the nation”. Authors’ translation of a fragment of the article “Abaixo o fascismo”, *Voz Operária*, n. 47, January 1969, p. 3.

vê nas instruções da censura, de temer especialmente o humorismo, as “charges”. É uma ditadura que se sente abalada diante das caricaturas e piadas...³⁰

A fragile dictatorship, conscious of counting on friable support, even from the bourgeois press, responds with ruthlessness to secure its grip on governance. With the implementation of AI-5, it “avançou na escalada antidemocrática e quer submeter nosso povo a um regime fascista para continuar a levar à prática sua política de traição nacional”³¹. In the caricatures featured in *Voz Operária*, this regime is consistently depicted as vulnerable and subservient, whose actions are predominantly driven by apprehension regarding the potential loss of power and a sense of subjugation to the will of the United States. These two thematic elements emerge as pivotal within the caricature repertoire, with 15 out of the 27 analyzed pieces addressing the United States in various guises and 11 highlighting the Brazilian subservience to the Washington government. This perspective is discernible from the inception of *Voz Operária*'s caricature series, commencing with the first caricature published in the 14th issue in February 1966, and it remains a prevailing theme until the cessation of caricature usage in the issue 118 in December 1974. Within this context, considering *Voz Operária*'s pictorial satire as a unitary body of work, it becomes evident that the editorial team embraced an interpretation of events that, lately, became predominant in post-coup historiography, i.e., one that tends to magnify the role of the United States while downplaying what Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta defines as a broad and heterogeneous *golpista* faction (Motta 2014, 108) that, if not instrumental to the seizure of power, unquestionably played a pivotal role in its consolidation and maintenance. The perspective adopted by the PCB, as articulated by Marcos Napolitano, portrayed “a ditadura como “reacionária e entreguista”, a serviço dos Estados Unidos, que tentava disfarçar seu caráter através de uma pantomima “reformista”, mas que entrava em choque com os próprios interesses do capitalismo nacional brasileiro” (Napolitano 2014, 135). While Napolitano's words refer to the PCB's first resolution on the coup d'état (1965), which initially featured a simplistically analytical approach then reconsidered, the newspaper's stance on the representation of the United States remained steadfast. In this context, the examination of the opening

³⁰ “The measures taken against the press also show that the dictatorship, despite feeling supported by rifles and cannons, is afraid of the dissemination of facts, of events, of the truth, even when this dissemination is done with the distortions and partiality of bourgeois objectivism. And it goes so far, as can be seen in the censorship instructions, as to especially fear humour, “cartoons”. It is a dictatorship that feels shaken by caricatures and jokes...”. Authors’ translation of “A ditadura teme a verdade”, *Voz Operária*, n. 48, February 1969, 1.

³¹ “Has further escalated its anti-democratic policy and wants to submit our people to a fascist regime in order to continue its policy of national betrayal”. Author’s translation from “Abaixo o fascismo”, cit., 3.

and the closing caricatures of the cycle of pictorial satire in *Voz Operária* from 1966 to 1974 reveals a constant attention to the North American power and the dynamics between Brazil and the United States. In the initial caricature encountered (Figure 2), titled “A guerra de Johnson contra a pobreza na América Latina”³², the cartoonist overtly alludes to the Johnson Doctrine and the interventions initiated in the Dominican Republic in late April and early May of 1965. These interventions were driven by the conviction that “the American nations cannot, must not, and will not permit the establishment of another Communist government in the Western Hemisphere”³³. The support extended to loyalists in the Dominican case, as well as that granted – in other forms - to the Brazilian militaries the previous year (Napolitano 2014, 92-99), aimed at defeating what Michael Weis defines as “enemies in the Alliance”, i.e., the opponents of the Alliance for Progress (Weiss 1993, 141-170), culminating in the coup against then-President João Goulart, was perceived by *Voz Operária* as an attack to the impoverished Latin American population of workers and peasants - whose representation will be discussed at a later stage-, in the Brazilian context “se traduz em dificuldades crescentes para todos, em subalimentação e fome para muitos”³⁴. Graphically speaking, these ideas were represented in caricatures that visually communicated a policy “de esfomeamento do povo, de subordinação do país aos interesses do imperialismo norte-americano”³⁵. This iconographic message recurred prominently on the front page of the newspaper over the years, taking the form of a caricatured military figure serving as a puppet of the United States in the vignette titled “Gerência” (Figure 3), a character shown kissing a boot decorated with the letters US (Figure 4), or depictions of Uncle Sam exerting dominion over the Brazilian people or corrupting the press (Figure 5). This domination was “realizada através da pressão das agências de publicidade e diretamente pela propriedade de numerosos veículos de divulgação”³⁶, resulting in:

Por isso a imprensa brasileira em sua quase totalidade, pelo menos no que ela tem de mais importante quanto a influência sobre o povo, nunca expressa, nunca

³² “Johnson’s war against Latin American poverty”. Author’s translation.

³³ U.S. General Services Administration, *Public Papers of the President: Lyndon Baines Johnson, 1965* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 469-74.

³⁴ “Results in increasing hardship for everyone, malnutrition and hunger for many”. Authors’ translation from “O dever dos comunistas”, *Voz Operária*, n. 14, February 1966, 1.

³⁵ “The starvation of the people, the subordination of the country to the interests of US imperialism”. Authors’ translation. *Ibidem*.

³⁶ “Realised through pressure from advertising agencies and directly through the ownership of numerous media outlets”. Authors’ translation.

defende os interesses reais do país e do povo. Ela está alinhada a interesses estrangeiros, em especial a interesses norte-americanos.³⁷

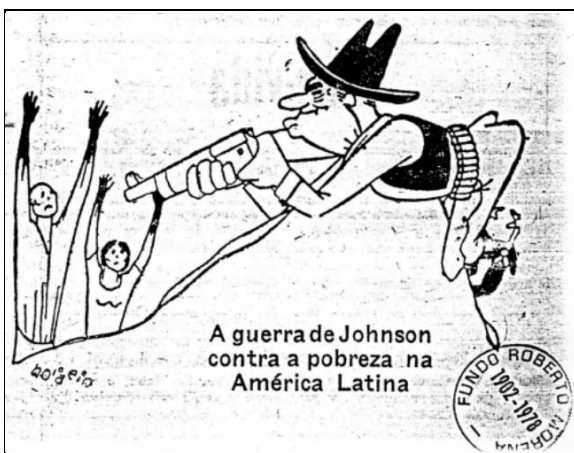


Figure 2: *Voz Operária*, n.14, February 1966, p.1.



Figura 3: *Voz Operária*, n.47, January 1969,



Figure 4: *Voz Operária*, n.48, February 1969, p.1.



Figura 5: *Voz Operária*, n.48 February 1969, p.4.

Within this narrative arc, it is possible to discern a pattern of collaboration and, notably, subservience between the U.S.A and the Brazilian militaries, culminating in an exceptionally emblematic caricature (Figure 6). This caricature, prominently occupying the middle of the page, resides in an article entitled “Contra o fascismo no Brasil”, and it features a cartographic representation of the American hemisphere, wherein the amiable countenances of Henry Kissinger and Ernesto Geisel respectively symbolise the United States and Brazil. Brazil,

³⁷ “That’s why the Brazilian press, almost in its entirety, at least as far as its influence on the people is concerned, never expresses, or defends the real interests of the country and the people. It is aligned with foreign interests, especially US interests”. Authors’ translation.

occupying a lower position, geographically and metaphorically, assumes a complicit gaze directed towards North American interests. The significance of this visual composition is further elucidated through the accompanying textual discourse, where the journalist expounds upon the cooperation between Washington and Brasília, strategically orchestrated to advance fascist agendas within Latin America: “Geisel mantém a mesma política expansionista em relação aos países vizinhos da América do Sul, buscando ampliar a o “hegemonismo” brasileiro na área, em função dos interesses do imperialismo e dos grupos monopolistas brasileiros”³⁸.

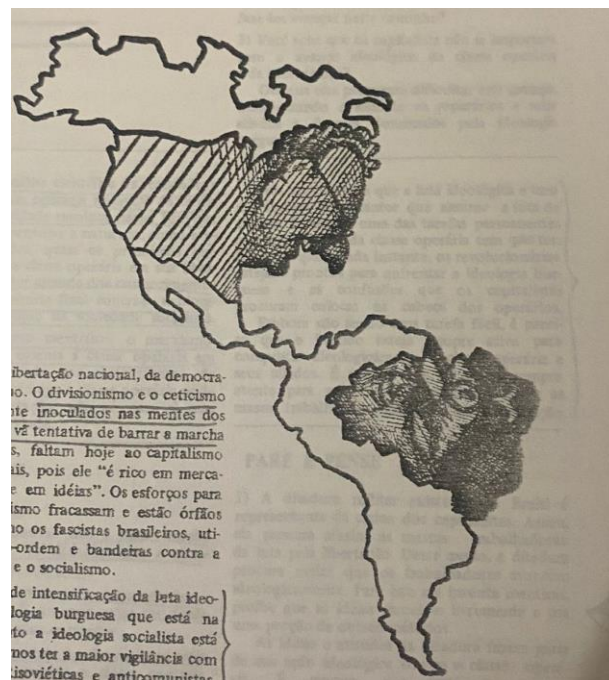


Figura 6: *Voz Operária*, n.118, December 1974, p.5.

The editorial team, which all over the ten-year gap between this caricature and the 1964 coup d'état had exhibited an unwavering commitment to shedding light on the implications of the dictatorship on the life of Brazilians and on the synergy between the domestic authoritarian regime and the United States, transcends in this section the national borders to denounce the expanding shadow of military violence. This shadow, as exposed in the passage below, had already cast its ominous presence over other countries and, regrettably, posed a looming threat to others:

³⁸ “Geisel maintained the same expansionist policy towards the neighbouring countries of South America, seeking to expand Brazilian “hegemonism” in the area, in the interests of imperialism and Brazilian monopoly groups”. Authors’ translation from “Contra o fascismo no Brasil”, *Voz Operária*, n. 118, December 1974, p. 5.

Na luta contra o regime fascista devemos sempre levar em conta o desenrolar da situação internacional, pois ela contribui consideravelmente para que possamos avançar e obter novos êxitos no caminho da derrota e liquidação desse regime antioperário, antinacional e antidemocrático. Mesmo nas condições difíceis em que se desenvolve nossa atividade, devemos impulsionar as seguintes tarefas: [...] ampliar a solidariedade a todos os povos que lutam contra o imperialismo e a reação, notadamente do Chile, Uruguay, Bolívia e Paraguay, países em que se dá uma direta interferência dos fascistas brasileiros; apoiar a luta do povo argentino irmão contra as ameaças de um golpe fascista.³⁹

The written text reflects a remarkable analytical evolution and a heightened degree of assertiveness, particularly when compared to the immediate aftermath of the coup. This transformation also signifies a renewed capacity to integrate the principles of denunciation and resistance both in dialectical discourse and visual representation. As previously elucidated, the political satire consistently communicates a singular narrative concerning the Brazilian and Latin American people who, except for Cuba⁴⁰, are always depicted as victims. To understand the rationale behind this portrayal, it becomes imperative to delve into the emotional dimensions of caricature, as well as the underlying intentions of *Voz Operária's* illustrators. As Ernst Gombrich observes, the metaphor of the devil is “the most frequent motif in this [political satire, AN] type of political imagination”: this metaphor refers to the emotional impact that can be evoked through the portrayal of malevolence within caricature, and is inextricably linked to the duality of oppressor and oppressed. In this context, Daniele Giglioli underlines how assuming the role of a victim “impone ascolto, promette e promuove riconoscimento, attiva un potente generatore di identità, diritto, autostima”⁴¹. Furthermore:

³⁹ “In the struggle against the fascist regime, we must always consider the unfolding international situation, because it contributes considerably to ensuring that we can progress further and achieve new successes on the road to the defeat and liquidation of this anti-worker, anti-national and anti-democratic regime. Even in the difficult conditions in which our activity is taking place, we must promote the following tasks: [...] to extend solidarity to all the peoples who are fighting against imperialism and reaction, especially in Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia and Paraguay, countries in which the Brazilian fascists are directly interfering; to support the struggle of the Argentinian people against the threats of a fascist coup”. Authors’ translation.

⁴⁰ The depiction of Cuba and its leader, Fidel Castro, as seen in two of the analyzed caricatures, deviates from the paradigm elucidated earlier. The victory of the socialist revolution is consistently represented as an *executio in effigie* of the United States, symbolized by the American nation being pierced at its heart by the Cuban flag's pole or trampled upon by Castro during the act of raising it.

⁴¹ “Demands listening, promises and promotes recognition, activates a powerful generator of identity, entitlement, self-esteem”. Authors’ translation.

Solo nella forma cava della vittima troviamo oggi un'immagine verosimile, [...] una "macchina mitologica" che a partire dal centro vuoto di una mancanza genera incessantemente un repertorio di figure capace di soddisfare il bisogno che proprio da quel vuoto ha tratto origine. (Giglioli 2014, 9-10).⁴²

The "forma cava" – hollow form -, a term aptly employed by Giglioli to characterize the victim, appears to take tangible shape in the representation of the labourer featured in the 112th issue of 1974. In this depiction, the individual, or more precisely, the remnants thereof, serves as a poignant metaphor for a proletariat left hungry and devastated by the grip of the dictatorship (Figure 7). The caricatures featured in *Voz Operária*, directed at those enduring the dictatorship, align with the publication's editorial stance which, article after article, emphasizes almost like mantra terms such as hunger, famine, and violence. Consequently, when portraying the impacts of the military regime, living bodies are seldom depicted. Instead, they are frequently replaced by images of corpses and skeletons. Even when living individuals are present, they appear destined for a future marked by torment and death (Figure 8).



Figura 7: *Voz Operária*, n.112, June 1974, p.5



«São inegavelmente comunistas»
Eu os acuso de terroristas vermelhos mas a menina insiste em dizer que são sua mãe, seu irmão e seu professor.

Figura 8: *Voz Operária*, n.18, June 1966, p.1.

⁴² "Only in the hollow form of the victim do we today find a verisimilar image, [...] a 'mythological machine' that, starting from the empty centre of a lack, ceaselessly generates a repertoire of figures capable of satisfying the need that originated from that very void". Authors' translation.

However, departing from the contemplations and self-pitying tendencies that Giglioli presents in his *Critica della vittima*, in the case being analyzed here, the dehumanized depiction of bodies reduced to mere skeletons – exemplified, for instance, in Figure 1, where the impoverished of Latin America confront a predatory figure like Johnson – should be viewed as an incitement, a catalyst for reaction that forms a bond with another aspect of the newspaper's iconography. In this context, we encounter an iconography characterized by robust and dynamic bodies, representing individuals primed for the battle against fascism (figures 9-10).

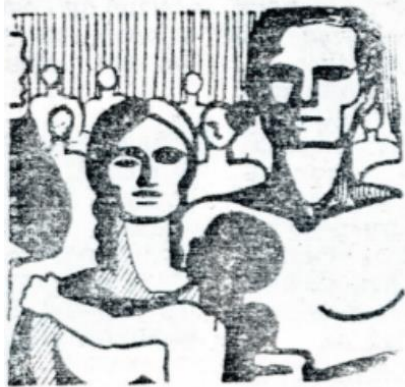


Figura 9: *Voz Operária*, n.47, January 1969, p. 2.



Figura 10: *Voz Operária*, n.48, February 1969, p.2.

Notably, these depictions are consistently rendered through woodcut illustrations. It is our assertion that while caricature, as elucidated thus far, served *Voz Operária* as a tool for denunciation, the visual lexicon of what we may term a “summons to struggle” finds its expression mainly through woodcuts. An imagery that thrives by virtue of its affiliation with a well-entrenched textual and visual canon firmly embedded within the Brazilian popular tradition of *literatura do cordel*. The latter, indeed, made extensive use of woodcut illustrations for the covers and pages of their *folhetos* (Maranhão 1981). In this regard, when we contemplate the newspaper's objectives of broadening the struggle against the dictatorship and its intended readership, it becomes patently evident that *Voz Operária* employs a form of communication rooted in the Brazilian popular tradition—one “que expressa a alma do povo, que diverte, que informa, que ensina ao seu publico” (Curran 1991, 572)⁴³. Indeed, considering the choice to utilize

⁴³ “Which reflects the soul of the people, that entertains, that informs, that educates its audience». Authors’ translation.

woodcut illustrations with the explicit aim of mobilizing the proletarian masses, one must take into consideration, on the one hand, the familiarity of the popular gaze towards this pictorial genre and the immediate and effortless comprehension of the conveyed visual message. On the other hand, the profound transformation undergone by *cordéis* during the 1960s and 1970s in the 20th century. What was originally conceived as folkloric literature from the north-eastern regions, stemming from improvised oral poetry during local fairs, underwent a significant geographical transformation during the 1960s and 1970s. It extended its influence to the metropolises of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, sparking the interest of engaged intellectuals, not only for its literary structure but also for its iconographic composition (Machado, 1982). Furthermore, with the ascent of the military regime, the *cordel*—of which the excerpt from the poet Azulão, chosen to introduce this text, serves as a brief example—reinvigorated its character “satírico dos seus versos sobre a realidade política, econômica e social brasileira” (Curran 1991, 571)⁴⁴, establishing itself as a voice of opposition to the regime. Therefore, it is conceivable to regard *Voz Operária*'s choice of woodcut illustrations as a deliberate recourse to a familiar cultural element, one aimed at harnessing its traditional capacity for cohesion. In this sense, to illustrate what this author perceives as the duality in the newspaper's iconographic expression, we may return to the 1974 page mentioned earlier (figure 11), which stands as a unique case among those analysed. It possesses the distinctive characteristic of merging the two visual components of denunciation and resistance, as well as the two genres of caricature and woodcut. In the form of iconographic consecutiveness, the written text of the article serves as the connecting element, juxtaposing the detrimental actions of the Brazilian military dictatorship and the United States (figure 6) with the struggle of the PCB and the civil society. This collective endeavour embraces the effort for a Brazil, metaphorically transposed into woodcut imagery in the form of the Christ the Redeemer statue, opposing the advance of the swastika (figure 12).

⁴⁴ “The satirical character of his verses about the political, economic, and social reality of Brazil”. Authors’ translation.

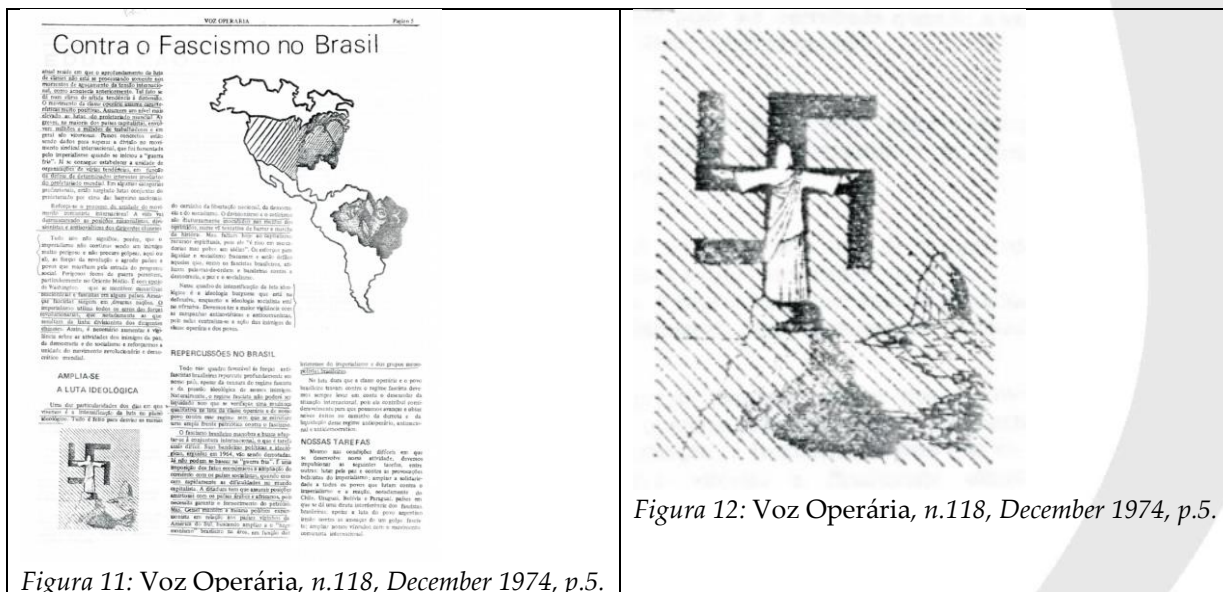


Figura 11: Voz Operária, n.118, December 1974, p.5.

Figura 12: Voz Operária, n.118, December 1974, p.5.

Conclusions

In contemplating the darkest era of Brazilian authoritarianism, namely, the period of military dictatorship, our attention has turned to the analysis of a specific instance of resistance enacted within the pages of *Voz Operária*. The analysis of the periodical has allowed the demonstration of the narrative and iconographic strategies of opposition to the regime employed by it, and consequently, by the PCB, of which *Voz Operária* served as the official organ during the period under consideration. In this context, the interweaving of narrative and images has illustrated the emergence of a dual and consequential pattern designed to vehiculate denunciation and the struggle against the military regime. Within the scope of this investigation, our focal point has been twofold. Firstly, we aimed to discern the themes employed by the newspaper in its condemnation of the atrocities committed during the dictatorship. Simultaneously, we sought to dissect the strategies employed to galvanize action in the form of resistance. Additionally, we delved into the readership of *Voz Operária*, striving to delineate the target audience. In this endeavor, it is imperative to consider both the inherent characteristics of partisan journalism and the intricacies of disseminating a clandestine publication. By merging these multifaceted elements with the discourse and imagery we encountered, we can hypothesize that, primarily, the editorial team directed its efforts towards an internal audience. They harbored the aspiration that the conveyed message might eventually permeate a wider demographic, comprising sectors of society distinct from the PCB but equally receptive to and vehemently opposed to the dictatorial regime. The newspaper's content was organized around three core themes: the vicissitudes of the PCB, national politics and economics, and international news. Through these themes, it

engaged in a three-fold dialogue: with the party's militants, with prospective supporters through proselytism, and with various socio-political groups beyond the PCB. *Voz Operária's* approach combined introspection with proselytism and engagement with other socio-political actors. It sought to not only educate and mobilize its core readership but also to establish networks of exchange with other opposition forces. This tripartite strategy aimed at achieving opposition unity, fostering critical thinking, and encouraging collective action against the military regime. The analysis of *Voz Operária's* iconographic elements, particularly caricatures and woodcuts, during the period from 1966 to 1974 reveals a profound and multifaceted engagement with the tumultuous political landscape of Brazil under dictatorship. The newspaper's utilization of these visual components as tools for both denunciation and resistance provides a unique perspective on this historical era. Caricatures served as powerful instruments of denunciation, allowing the newspaper to criticize and lampoon military figures and the heightened censorship that followed the promulgation of Institutional Act No. 5 (AI-5). These satirical images functioned as anti-magic, diminishing the perceived power of the adversary through derision. The semiotic contrast between caricatures and woodcuts within *Voz Operária's* pages highlights their thematic engagement and conventional roles. Caricatures focused on denunciation and commentary, often emphasizing Brazil's subservience to the United States and the vulnerability of the dictatorship. Meanwhile, woodcuts offered the prospect of a scenario characterized by political engagement, resistance, and active political struggle aligns seamlessly with the rich tradition of Brazilian cordel literature. The evolution of *Voz Operária's* narrative and visual representation over the years is evident, from its initial emphasis on victimization to its later portrayal of a proletariat ready to resist fascism. The use of skeletal imagery served as a catalyst for reaction, evoking the dire consequences of the dictatorship's policies. Additionally, the newspaper's iconography began to depict robust and dynamic bodies prepared for the battle against fascism, signaling a shift towards a more assertive and empowered stance. In the context of a fragile dictatorship that exhibited both violence and insecurity, *Voz Operária's* commitment to shedding light on the ramifications of the regime and its alignment with the United States remained unwavering. The newspaper's analytical depth and integration of denunciation and resistance evolved over time, reflecting the changing dynamics of the Brazilian political landscape. As we reflect on the historical significance of *Voz Operária's* iconography, it becomes clear that these visual elements played a crucial role in shaping public perception and resistance during a challenging period in Brazil's history. They stand as a testament to the power of antagonist press in the face of authoritarianism and the enduring capacity of art to evoke emotions and inspire change.

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Stefano Martinelli

Graduated in Area and Global Studies for International Cooperation at the University of Turin. He is currently a Ph.D. student in Historical, Geographical, and Anthropological Studies at the Universities of Padua and Ca' Foscari of Venice. His research interests focus on authoritarianism in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, the history of the Latin American left, political journalism, and the resistance to bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes in the Southern Cone of Latin America.

Contact: stefano.martinelli.3@phd.unipd.it

Fulvia Zega

Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of Roma Tre. Currently she is researcher in History and Institutions of the Americas at the Department of Antiquities, Philosophy, and History of the University of Genoa. Her studies focus on the history of Argentina and Brazil in contemporary times and on the relations between these countries and Europe, with particular emphasis on the following themes: Latin American authoritarianism, Brazilian Estado Novo, Argentine nationalism, anti-Semitism, and political violence.

Contact: fulvia.zega@unige.it

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